

Rush County Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 30, 2009; Rush County, Indiana.

The Rush County Health Department is awaiting the delivery of our children's seasonal flu vaccine. Residents will be notified as soon as it becomes available. The Center for Disease Control is recommending that children, from 6 months of age to 5 years of age, be vaccinated for seasonal influenza. Be sure to contact your Doctor about your potential risks. Individuals in these categories should get vaccinated for H1N1 as well as seasonal flu (everyone should obtain a vaccination for seasonal influenza, as soon as possible).

Additionally, The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has defined "priority groups" for vaccination once the 2009 H1N1 vaccination is available. These groups include:

- Pregnant Women,
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age,
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel,
- Children 6 months of age through young adults 24 years of age, and
- Adults 25 through 64 years of age who have chronic medical conditions.

At this time, there are few cases of H1N1 reported in people older than 64 years of age. It is suspected that these people may have a natural immunity to the virus, but few younger adults and no children are immune.

Prepare yourself and your family by helping to stop the spread of germs. There are 7 basics for better health.

1. Avoid close contact with people who are sick; and, when you are sick, keep your distance from others.

2. Cover your mouth and nose. Cough into the crook of your elbow, as this avoids spreading germs to your hands, where you can easily spread them to others.
3. WASH YOUR HANDS. WASH YOUR HANDS. WASH YOUR HANDS... and teach your children to wash their hands for as long as it takes to sing, "Happy Birthday".
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs are often spread when you touch something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
5. Take care of yourself and with other healthy habits. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.
6. Stay home when you are sick. If possible, stay home from work or school, and avoid running errands when you are sick.
7. Don't eat or drink after anyone.

Currently, The Indiana State Department of Health is monitoring all influenza activity in the state, both seasonal influenza and the 2009 H1N1, through the use of influenza sentinel surveillance and the Public Health Emergency Syndromic System (PHESS). Through this system, data is collected on a daily basis and analyzed by the State Health Department Epidemiologists.

Because the pandemic H1N1 virus is new and may change, symptoms may change too. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, and muscle aches. Some people have also reported runny nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Symptoms appear 2-7 days after exposure. People generally can spread influenza viruses from 1-2 days before symptoms start until about 7 days after. However, scientists are not exactly sure how long people may shed the new H1N1 influenza virus.

Since we are in an area where influenza cases have been identified, should you experience any of the following warning signs, contact your health care provider immediately.

Warning signs in children: Fast breathing or trouble breathing, bluish color, not drinking enough fluids, not waking up or not interacting, being so irritable that the child does not want to be held, flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough, and fever with a rash.

Warning signs in adults: Difficulty breathing, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting.

Finally, keep your home as germ-free as possible by, keeping "common touch" areas (tables, remotes, light switches, water faucets, telephones, etc.), clean with

a household disinfectant. Don't share towels, eating utensils and dishes, without washing them first; and, wash bed linens frequently, using a hot setting.

The Rush County Health Department will continue to provide our community with new information, as it becomes available to us. In the meantime, stay informed and keep your loved ones healthy. Be prepared and take precautions, to prevent the spread of the virus. Always remember, "Your best defense is a good offense" - so get vaccinated. Watch for flu symptoms and if they occur, contact your family Physician, Family Health Services, Rush Memorial Hospital, or the Rush County Health Department.

Sources: The Center for Disease Control, The Indiana State Department of Health, The Marion County Health Department, Dr. Judith A. Monroe-State Health Commissioner, Dr. Richard Feldman, contributing opinion to The Indianapolis Star, September 15, 2009.

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